

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 11 and 22 to 33 are pending. Claims 12 to 19 have been withdrawn from consideration in view of a restriction requirement. By the present amendment, claims 12 to 19 have been canceled, without prejudice. Claims 1 to 11 and 20 to 33 have been amended. The Examiner's reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the above amendment and the following remarks.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 4, 5, 7 to 9, 22, 24, 25, and 31 to 32 would be allowable if they are rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1 to 3, 10 to 11, 20 to 21, 26 to 30, and 33 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Tsuda for the reasons given in pages 3 to 6 of the Office Action. With respect to claim 3, the Examiner stated that "Tsuda discloses further including a precharge circuit connected to the search line pair for discharging each line of the search line pair to ground upon determination that at least one of the memory cells connected thereto are defective (page 5, paragraphs [0087-0088])."

Applicant respectfully disagrees. In paragraphs 87 and 88, Tsuda describes the process of precharging or discharging the match line ML, but does not describe any process for discharging either of the search line pair CMP or CMPN. Nor does paragraphs 87 and 88 in Tsuda describe anything about determining any defective memory cells. Further, applicant cannot find any

description in Tsuda of “discharging the search line pair”. Indeed, none of the drawings in Tsuda shows the search line pair CMP and CMPO connected to any discharging mechanism. Therefore, Tsuda does not disclose or suggest “a precharge circuit connected to the search line pair for discharging each line of the search line pair to ground upon determination that at least one of the search line pair to ground upon determination that at least one of the memory cells connected thereto are defective”, as claimed in claim 3. Accordingly, the Examiner’s reconsideration of the rejection of claim 3 is respectfully requested.

Claims 7 and 24 have been rewritten in independent form. Claims 20 and 30 have been amended to incorporate the elements of claims 22 and 31, respectively. Claims 7, 22, 24, and 31 have been indicated as allowable by the Examiner.

Claims 2, 4 to 6, and new claims 34 and 35 depend upon claim 3. Claims 8 to 11 depend upon claims 7. Claims 21, 23, and new claims 36 and 37 depend upon claim 20. Claims 25 to 29 and new claims 38 and 39 depend upon claim 24, and claims 31, 33 and new claims 40 and 41 depend upon claim 30. The dependent claims are allowable for the same reasons given for the independent claims.

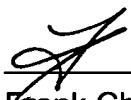
Claims 6 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as unpatentable over Tsuda in view of Hatanaka (US 2004/0022098, filed 7/28/03).

Applicant respectfully submits that the present application claims priority to a filing date of 4/25/03, prior the 102(e) filing date of Hatanaka on 7/28/03. Accordingly, it is believed that Hatanaka is not applicable as prior art to the

present application. Further, the rejection is rendered moot by the above Amendment, i.e., claims 6 and 23 depend from allowable independent claims 3 and 20, respectively.

For the foregoing reasons, the above-identified application including 2 to 11, 20, 21, 23 to 31, and 33 to 41, is believed to be in condition for allowance. The Examiner's early and favorable action is respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,


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